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PACIFIC WHALE INCREASE SEEN

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay said today that a Pacific gray whale census being conducted at Point Loma, Calif., indicates this year's count will exceed 1,000 whales, as compared with 850 last year.

The census is being conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the National Park Service as these giant sea mammals pass southward along the California coast in their annual winter migration.

The whales move each winter from the far north to the lagoons of lower California to breed. In the course of the migration they sweep close to the Cabrillo National Monument at Point Loma and the monument serves as a vantage point for the census.

Interest in the gray whale stems from its past economic prominence and the decimation it suffered at the hands of the whaling industry in the late 1800's and again in the 1920's. The herd's ranks are swelling and the species is expected to regain economic importance with the help of protective regulations.

Because whales inhabit the open sea and often visit waters adjacent to more than one country, their capture is regulated by international agreements. The gray whale of the Pacific annually finds its way to waters off Mexico, Canada, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as well as the United States.

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